

29
1863
Religion and Learning mutually assistant
to each other.

A

S E R M O N

PREACHED BEFORE THE
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

AT ST. MARY's,

ON

ACT-SUNDAY, JULY 12. 1761.

BY JOSEPH SIMPSON, D.D.
LATE FELLOW OF QUEEN'S COLLEGE,
NOW RECTOR OF WEYHILL, HANTS.

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TO THE REVEREND
DOCTOR BROWNE

Vice-Chancellor of the University of OXFORD,

A N D

To the Rest of the HEADS of HOUSES.

SIRS,

PARENTS, who take upon themselves the care and government of their own children at a flexible and tender age, think themselves almost singularly happy, if, by their natural authority, they can but preserve in them an innocent worthlessness in an age so fashionably wicked: what commendations and thanks therefore are justly due to You, who, by the kind discipline of this place of education, and by your well poized conduct and learned instructions, not only prevent thousands of youth, at the most obstinate and giddy time of life, from running into vice and folly; but qualify them for every station and employment, and render them a blessing to their parents, an ornament to themselves and their country? If, indeed, the best laws most prudently enforced and wisely executed have failed in this and it's sister university, in some few instances, of having their much-wished-for effect on some naturally vicious or enthusiastic dispositions; parents ought to consider, that such constitutional tempers and passions together with some fashionable ways of thinking and acting so carefully nursed up in them at home; and supplied, by a maternal fondness, with instruments of indulging them in these learned seminaries, cannot, at their time of life, and in such circumstances, be easily confined within any tolerable bounds; much less, totally subdued and eradicated. It is therefore to be hoped, that those parents, who, forming an unjust notion of our universities from the miscon-

misconduct of a few unworthy members of them, have been inclined to send their children ABROAD for education, will now be convinced that the malady, they complained of, was in a great measure imaginary; or, at least, leave off the proposed remedy as insufficient, since sad experience has demonstrated to them, that their not hearing of the vices of their children, placed at a distance, is no proof of their committing none; as they return home again accomplished only with every vice and folly.

Cælum non animum mutant, qui trans mare currunt.
For what can be expected from them in such places, where they are entirely left to the direction and government of all their youthful lusts and passions without the least private instruction or public restraint, if they will not submit to the guidance of You, who make use of all the rational restrictions joined to the kindest and most learned instructions; or be influenced by the steady and prudent administration of HIM, in whom, by reading men as well as books, the true Christian-Scholar and gentleman are happily united; or encouraged by the patronage of that NOBLE PERSON, who, from his intimate acquaintance with letters, embraces every opportunity of promoting Learning, and countenancing learned men?

I am,

SIRS,

Your very much obliged,

humble servant,

Queen's College,
July 15. 1761.

JO. SIMPSON.

PROVERBS III. 13.

HAPPY IS THE MAN, THAT FINDETH WISDOM; AND THE MAN, THAT GETTETH UNDERSTANDING.

REASON is the just prerogative of human nature; and, when cultivated and improved to the best advantage by a learned and religious education, the greatest glory and ornament of it. It sets a man in the fairest point of light, adds weight and true lustre to dignity, and makes the garments of holiness highly honourable.

FOR when the acquired improvements of knowledge have ripened us into men, and Religion hath beautified and adorned the rational creature; when the Scholar hath enlightened and instructed the mind of the Christian, and the Christian again sanctified the heart of, and finished, the Scholar; then will the Christian-Scholar be enabled to support and maintain any truly honourable and useful distinction or employment in life with the greatest advantage to

society and reputation to himself in this world, and be best qualified for the conversation of angels and of God himself in the next.

BUT if Religion and Learning, instead of uniting their friendly aid and assistance in mutually defending and illustrating each other, should so far be at enmity between themselves, as to declare open war; Religion, which is a reasonable service, would soon lie buried under the rubbish of monkish barbarism and superstition, or be greatly disfigured by the madness of enthusiasm: and Learning on the other hand, which in itself is only a reputable amusement, would be found very defective in many points of useful and necessary knowledge without an intimate acquaintance with the history of our holy religion; would wander about, as the old philosophers did, in the dark and intricate mazes of doubt and error; 'till it sunk at last, as they commonly did, into the very dregs of scepticism and libertinism. So that Religion cannot say to Learning I have no need of you; nor yet Learning to Religion, I have no need of you. Nay, the heathens themselves were so truly sensible of the great advantage of their mutual and friendly alliance, that they always appointed the same persons to be both their philosophers and priests; wisely judging, that those, who were most conversant in the one kind of knowledge, were best qualified to instruct and improve men in the other; that those, who had searched deepest into the works of nature, would have the truest notions of, and the highest veneration and zeal for,

for, the divine author of it; and, on the other hand, that those persons and nations were proportionably more brutish and ignorant in most respects, the more destitute they were of true Religion.

AND almost every period of the history of christianity shews us the necessity of this close and social connexion between Religion and Learning:— Religion, as will afterwards appear, being highly indebted to Learning, as well for the defence of her established honours, as for the preservation of her original purity:— and Religion again, with a grateful return, rendering that Learning more extensive and useful, and the learned more happy:— being that wisdom, which alone can sanctify all our other studies; and make us truly wise, even wise unto salvation. Happy is the man, that findeth wisdom; and the man that getteth understanding. It would be unnecessary in this place to spend time in giving you a long critical interpretation on the words of my text; it will be sufficient for my present purpose just to observe by the way, that tho' wisdom, understanding and knowledge seem to be used in some places by the wise man in a promiscuous manner, as signifying but one and the same thing; and tho' wisdom in the original denotes in general, all knowledge human as well as divine; yet I take wisdom, in it's strictest sense, to signify, and what Solomon most frequently means by it in this book, Religious Virtue, or Religion. And by understanding is meant, that faculty of

the mind, regularly improved by a proper education, whereby we distinguish and know things to be what they really are ; and then make a wise, proper and discreet use of that knowledge.

— Happy is the man that findeth ¹ wisdom, religious virtue or Religion ; that is, the fear of GOD and the habitual regulation of the heart and affections by that principle ; and the man that getteth, or as it is in the original, ² shall produce, draw out, or utter his understanding, that is, hath the faculty of communicating wise and edifying sentiments ; or, in other words, his well improved knowledge and Learning conducted with prudence and discretion. — Thus understood, this text, and several others in this book of Proverbs, convey to us a clear and distinct meaning free from tautology.

AND the reason why Solomon seems to connect divine and human Learning so closely together, and recommend them jointly to our pursuit, is, that, when they unite their friendly beams, they mutually aid, strengthen and beautifully illustrate each other ; which is the first thing, I shall endeavour to prove.

And then, Secondly, shew ; how and in what manner they conduce to make us happy.

And, Thirdly, conclude with an inference from what has been said.

IT is remarked by some philosophers, that there is nothing of all the works of nature so

¹ חכמָה Sapientiam vel divinam vel humanam.

² יְפִקְתַּבּוֹנָה educet scientiam, intelligentiam, prudentiam, seu intelligentiam prudentiam. incon-

inconsiderable, so remote, or so fully known ; but what will, by being made to reflect on other things, at once enlighten them, and shew itself the clearer. This observation will hold good with respect to arts and sciences in general, as Cicero affirms ; and with regard to divine and human knowledge in particular, as I shall now endeavour to prove.

A N D, First, with respect to Religion, how far it may assist and improve human Learning ; which will best appear by considering what advantages have already been received from it.

The history of our holy Religion is so interwoven with the profane, and several other branches of human knowledge ; that it is impossible to arrive at any degree of excellency and extensive certainty in the latter, without an intimate acquaintance with the former. And if we turn over the most eminent heathen philosophers, we shall find them frequently confessing, that their philosophy was not the result of their own rational enquiries and speculations, but a collection of traditions gleaned up in their travels thro' several countries from the remains of those, who lived nearer the first ages of the world, and consequently nearer the scenes of divine revelation. Many beams of true wisdom shine, as so many lights in dark places, amidst their own confused and obscure notions ; and we may trace up most of their important and

¹ Omnes artes, quæ ad humanitatem pertinent, habent quodam commune vinculum, & quasi cognatione quâdam inter se continentur. Cicero pro Arch. Poetâ, & ferè passim.

principal doctrines, together with the great use of alphabetical letters, as the only proper channels to convey them to all succeeding ages, to the same sacred fountain-head. And if we compare some of their works with the holy scriptures, we shall find it, perhaps, the best way of coming at the true meaning of many things in them ; and of stripping them of all that mixture of fables and ornaments of fancy, in which the heathen mythology loved to dress and set them off. And this will appear more probable and much stronger, if we observe, as we travel farther from those places, where the light of divine revelation at any time shined ; that mens notions of truth and knowledge in general gradually grew dimmer and more obscure, 'till we are surrounded with almost Ægyptian darkness ; and even without G o d in the world. For the truth of this I appeal to the histories of the late discoveries of several parts of the western-world ; which shew us, that the Learning and manners of the natives bore a very sensible proportion to their notions of Religion. That tho' the Mexicans were the most civilized of them, with respect to government and buildings ; and were as ingenious in idolatry, as in some mechanical arts ; yet all their knowledge both civil and religious was mostly oral tradition ; that they were so far from having the least notion of alphabetical letters, that they were only in possession of the first rudiments of picture-writing. And tho' the Ægyptians had, or, at least, might have, learned

ed alphabetical letters in David's or Solomon's reign from the mutual commerce and trade carried on, at that time, between the two nations ; yet let me here observe, as a confirmation of what I only hinted above, that the tedious and laborious workmanship of their disjointed hieroglyphics, and symbolic monuments, 'till then the sole means of conveying all their Learning, and which afterwards continued in use with some other characters, occasionally added, 'till near 300 years before our SAVIOUR's time ; as appears by their representation of the cruel tyrant Ochus by a sword, and many other things ; — the numberless, troublesome marks of the Chinese to this day ; — the Mexican picture-writing I just now mentioned ; — and the total ignorance of all kinds of writing and reading among the rest of the Americans ; — these, I say, are very strong arguments of man's inability of finding out alphabetical letters, and ³ of God's imparting them first to Moses ; in order that, when all traditional re-

¹ Their marks or literary characters are 60, 80 or 120000, says Walton, 54409 according to other writers ; and Le Compte says, that he is no learned man amongst them that does not understand 15 or 20000 of their marks.

² Vide the histories of the conquest of Mexico, and of the first settlements in the west indies and north America.

³ Eusebius Praep. Evang. p. 431. 2. Clem. Alex. in Strom: L. 1. Cyril. cont. Julian. L. 7. Winder's history of knowledge and others. There is not the least hint of any historic inscription in the sacred writings before the giving of the law : witnessing pillars and heaps of stones were the customary ways of ratifying or preserving the memorial of all contracts and other things, as appears from some passages in Genesis,

velations were obscured and almost lost in the world for want of them, writing, and, in due time, the invention of printing might preserve and propagate that invaluable system of true Religion and useful Learning, with which H E was then blessing the Israelites in a very extraordinary and particular manner, and convey it pure, with it's great completion in the books of the new testament, to all nations and future generations.

B U T farther ; since the books of Moses and some other parts of the old testament were the first written laws for many ages at least, and contained not only a noble system of divine knowledge ; but a beautiful description of the true origin of man and the world, — of the universal deluge, by which various phænomena in natural philosophy can only be explained — and likewise many perfect specimens of sciences, — such as history, geography, chronology, poetry, fable-writing and so forth, — we may reasonably suppose, that the neighbouring nations, with whom the sacred people had any intercourse or connection, were very desirous of learning to copy after such divine originals : especially, when we consider, that the Israelites, whose name G o d had made great in all the East, by a long series of the most astonishing miracles, must excite the curiosity of every inquisitive and learned person of those times, to be acquainted with the genius and history of this very extraordinary people ; whose lawgivers, prophets and kings were the greatest and best
of

of men, — whose divine precepts breathed as much hospitality to strangers, as they themselves were ambitious of making and gaining proselytes, in which they were very successful; — and whose inspired writings could not but cast an additional light on the most learned enquiries of all travellers; and afford them matter both for wonder and imitation. With which, St. Cyril says, even Greece, with all her improved knowledge, was so far from having any thing to be compared; that all her riches, whatever she has valuable in her philosophy, were at first plundered from the writings of Moses. Not that I think, as some learned men do, that all arts and sciences are contained in the old testament; or, that man had no inventive faculties given him to make very considerable improvements on, and additions to, those communications, which GOD at sundry times and in divers manners made to Adam and many of his posterity for the comforts and ornaments as well as the necessaries of human life: But this I may safely affirm, that if the Ægyptians, or any other nation had transmitted down to posterity a history, in which was contained such a variety of Learning, they might then have been very justly commended for what their great admirers, who pretend to see farther into that far distant terra incognita than other men, can at this dis-

1 2 Chro. 17. And Solomon numbered all the strangers that were in the land of Israel — and there were found 153600. And in Acts 2 Ch. there were strangers and proselytes in every nation under heaven.

tance of time only suppose, they were acquainted with ; — who almost adore them, as the Athenians did their unknown God, for their unknown Learning. For notwithstanding the many excellent things that have been spoken of the antient Ægyptian arts and sciences in general, which all must allow were considerable, from what the scriptures just mention, for those very early times and in comparison with most of their neighbours, especially their skill in architecture, politicks and laws, which some writers very highly commend ; and which, give me leave to offer a very probable conjecture, might be owing in some measure to Joseph's heavenly-instructed administration of affairs, yet we know for certain, that all their natural philosophy, of which they chiefly boasted, could only be conjectural, without the help of telescopes, experiments and other requisites, but especially mathe-maticks, in which they had made, if we may believe ¹ Thales and Pythagoras, no considerable progress, when they were in Ægypt. They had, indeed, the grounds and elements of most parts of real Learning ; ² but the hereditary restric-

¹ The one, by his invention of the forty seventh proposition of the first book of Euclid ; the other, by his finding out how to inscribe a rectangled triangle within a circle after their return from Ægypt, shew, that neither astronomy, philosophy nor any other art or science, which depended on mathematicks, were as yet carried to any great perfection there. Laert. in vit. Thalet.

² As these restrictions nipted in the bud all emulation of excelling in the study of arts and sciences ; so application to one particular branch of them, exclusive of the rest, proved very defective and prejudicial, especially in the study of physic ; where a fundamental and universal knowledge of the whole animal economy,

tions of arts and sciences to certain families ; — the separation of each particular branch of them, to which the learned were confined, exclusive of the rest ; — together with the very early rise and quick increase of superstition, were the well-known great impediments in their growth to perfection : besides all this, their Learning could not possibly be either very certain or extensive, since it all depended upon oral tradition ; or, was only represented and preserved by hieroglyphical characters 'till the times of David or Solomon, as I before hinted, and Sir Isaac Newton in his long well-weighed chronology proves ; which could be of no great service to record intelligibly and distinctly any series of facts of their own and past ages, but by being connected with traditional reports ; which end is defeated by the changes and unavoidable uncertainties to which the latter in time are subject. And a very convincing proof of this, is, that if the Ægyptian priests had had any authentic written records of ancient times, when Herodotus or Diodorus Siculus were in Ægypt, ¹ for they confess they saw none, they would neither have pleaded ignorance of the history of their pyramids, — nor fabled such ridiculous stories of their own

my, and of the force of the *materia medica* upon it, is absolutely necessary to the cure of many complicated cases.

¹ The manner, that the priests took to prove the number and reigns of their kings, was, by a correspondent number of wooden Colossi or statues of the high priests, which were shewn to Herodotus and all travellers in a grand apartment, to explain the antiquity and history of their country by. Herod. Euterp. Cap. 142, 143.

and country's incredible antiquity, — nor have varied so much in their reports about the reigns of some of their kings, as to make them differ from Manetho 6000 years and from each other 1000, tho' their calculations begin about the same period of time.—It is very improbable to suppose, that Cambyses, who was more an enemy to the gross idolatry of the Ægyptians, than to their Learning, should burn or carry away every record they had: but if he had, as some pretend to imagine; yet the very memory of the priests, who were their historians, and who were daily conversant in the historic monuments of all their material past transactions, would, at least, have preserved and delivered down a much better account 'till Herodotus's time, than we find they were then able to do. For all their own memoirs before their country was reduced by Alexander the great, which we find dispersed in Greek and Roman histories, are a poor, incoherent collection of tales unworthy the genius of an historic and learned nation.—From all which we may learn to set a just value on the divine books of the old testament; without which we should be ignorant of many very material things; and be left to feel out our way in the dark through blind traditions and obscure hints of much later, ignorant writers. For we cannot but see, how miserable a figure ancient history would make before Herodotus's time; and in what a labyrinth of uncertainties and errors we should wander, did we let go the

the clue of scriptural chronology ; since all heathen historians were necessitated to borrow some events from the Jewish accounts in order to give some air of probability to the absurdities they had to relate.

AND if we come down to the period, or time of the gospel dispensation, we may reasonably suppose, that our blessed SAVIOUR chose to make his appearance in the world, when human reason and Learning displayed their powers to the greatest advantage, that meer heathen eloquence could aspire to ; not only to invite the inquisitive eye to behold the beauty and purity of the gospel-precepts ; to search and see whether these things were so ; but likewise to give countenance to an age of good letters and Learning ; to help the studious in their researches after knowledge ; and to lead them into all truth. I do not here mean, as I said before, that all arts and sciences are contained in the scriptures ; but it is the peculiar excellency of true religion to enlighten our understandings and enlarge our ideas ; — to give us right notions of the nature and worship of GOD ; — to acquaint us with the origin of ourselves and the world ; — to inform us of the nature and reasons of things, in which all moral obligation is founded ; — to promote true knowledge in general, not only by expelling absurd fictions and

¹ We may learn from the Arundelian marbles at Oxford, that all heathen chronology, on which the perfection of history depends, was only in it's infancy about 260 years before our SAVIOUR's time.

the mists of ignorance and superstition, but by bringing a kind of day and sunshine upon the neighbouring branches of useful Learning ; — and, lastly, to improve the blessings of polite and civilized life, by the graces that accompany it. Accordingly we find, that the old sects of philosophers gradually decreased in proportion as christianity gained ground ; and that every Christian by the knowledge and excellency of it's doctrines became a philosopher. — ¹ Justin, the martyr, who was himself a philosopher, preferred the Christian Religion ; because it appeared to him to be the true philosophy : and Clemens, the Roman, after he had had recourse, but in vain, to the heathen philosophers and Ægyptian priests for the knowledge of many things, was indebted, at last, to the Christian Religion for his information ; and was not only converted himself, but brought over some of the best families of Rome to the Christian faith. Nay, Julian, the apostate, ordered that the Roman philosophy should be reformed and refined by the Christian ; from whence their philosophy became more religious, and their Religion more philosophical. And we cannot imagine, that the understandings of Christians now-a-days are better than those of all the wise men of antiquity ; but that we can argue better, and have more distinct and clearer notions of truth

¹ Vide the lives of Justin, Clemens and Julian. — Origen and Tertullian retained some tincture of their old tenets and way of philosophizing ; and were so far in the wrong and blame-worthy.

in general, is owing to the light of revelation. And history and our own observations may convince us, that not only the happiness and prosperity, but the Learning and real good manners of a people keep equal pace with the purity of the Religion they profess. We need not compare the enlighten'd Christian with the unletter'd heathen, nor the protestant with the papist for the truth of this; since the several popish communities themselves, according as the inhabitants are more or less blinded by the absurdities and superstitions of their Religion, are a full confirmation of it.— Thus far pure Religion tends to aid and advance knowledge human as well as divine;—to inform and refine mankind in morals and manners; and, whilst it gives the promises of the next life, improves and adorns the present.— Happy is the man that findeth wisdom.

Let us now see, on the other hand, how far human Learning aids, strengthens and illustrates Religion.— Happy is the man, that getteth understanding.

I shall say nothing of the Jewish Learning, or of the sons and schools of their prophets; because it is not an easy matter to prove, that they studied any thing else in them, than to read, transcribe, and interpret their own law; and to compose and rehearse divine hymns to musick. It must likewise be observed of christianity, that it had not it's foundation laid in proud science or human Learning. The Power of God, as well as the wisdom of God, were remark-

remarkably visible in the first establishment of it. — Divine inspiration and miracles more than supplied the want of all human erudition. For the divine treasure was committed to earthen vessels, men unlettered and ignorant ; lest we should imagine, as Origen against Celsus says, “that it was not truth itself that conquered men, but that the first converts to christianity had been over-reached by the specious and fallacious consequences of designing men ; or by the Learning of the Scholar.” — But as soon as signs and wonders, those necessary and immediate interpositions of divine providence, ceased ; revelation received it’s strongest aid and support from human science ; and from those eminent persons, whose names have adorned and cultivated letters. Human Learning was to them, not only what the star in the east was to the wise men, a sure guide to bring them to CHRIST ; but it likewise enabled them to give a reason of the hope that was in them ; to defend and propagate the Christian faith against all opposition. And, indeed, a man must be as ignorant of the history of our holy Religion, as he is of the world, to think, that what was at first a stumbling block to the Jews and to the Greeks foolishness, tho’ supported by prophecies out of their own law to convince the former, and established by miracles to silence the latter, could have alone, without any friendly aid and alliance, so successfully defeated the constant attacks of the declared infidel for so many ages, and guarded against the dangerous treachery of the

the personated Jew, the Christian deist, and the masked enthusiast, whose christianity is not founded on argument. For tho' our Religion depends not on the talents and wisdom of men for it's being; nor owes it's authority to the success of those, who have appeared in it's defence; since GOD has declared, and he cannot lie, that the gates of hell shall never prevail against it: yet because the greatest part of CHRIST's church have always been and still are unstable and unlearned, who are tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the flight of men, and cunning craf-tiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive; it has always been thought prudent and necessary for the watchmen of our holy Religion to put on the whole armour of GOD, and, being supported with the assistance of all human Learning, to repell the enemy, to repair the breaches that are made, and to secure the foundations of Religion; and, like Nehemiah and his men, to work in the buildings of our holy Jerusalem with one hand, and to hold a weapon of defence with the other.—St. Paul, that great master of reasoning, even in the times of divine inspiration, argued with his own countrymen the Jews from their own topicks of learning; and with the Gentiles out of their own poets: and established the great principles of christianity against the subtleties of the heathens by the same ways of reasoning, which were then in use amongst their most eminent philosophers.— And for the honour of our faith be it spoken,

that the purity of it's precepts and the brightness of it's doctrines always shined forth the strongest and clearest, and had the happiest influence on men's lives, when human Learning kept in it's zenith ; and when the most eminent converted masters of rhetorick and philosophy, through successive ages, were it's greatest ornaments, as well as ablest defenders : who having truth, a good conscience and God himself on their side, and being perfectly acquainted with their adversaries' weapons and armour in which they put their whole trust and confidence, always gained very easy victories over their strongest enemies, and put to flight the armies of the aliens. — “ If your scriptures, says Julian, have such power of improving you in wisdom ; if, as Eusebius boasts, you find in them the principles of universal knowledge, how comes it to pass, that you are so well versed in the writings and philosophy of the Greeks ? ” We read your books, replied St. Cyril, because we would be better able to confute your errors and destroy your superstition ; because from a knowledge of your fables and philosophy we are more capable of making the unequal comparison between our scriptures and them ; and consequently of setting a just value upon the truths of God.” From whence we may learn, that the purity of our holy Religion could never have been corrupted at any time, had not human Learning been at the same period either obscured or neglected ; nay, had not the inundations of the Scythians from the north, and the Saracens from the east swept

swept away even the very memory of letters : and then, indeed, all was darkness, superstition and error. — The first effort of emerging out of this deplorable, ignorant state, and of reviving true christianity, which lay buried under the ruins of human Learning, was made by the school-men by the help of the Peripatetic philosophy. They joined reasoning to matters of fact ; a conjunction without which there is no clear conviction : — they shewed the subject in a better light by the solution of difficulties which themselves had raised : — they set bounds to the looseness of expression, and introduced method, by which means they eased the mind, that in nice abstracted subjects labours much, and is apt to be discouraged and flag.

THUS far Religion was indebted to school-divinity for her friendly aid and assistance ; and ever since the greatest men have made it, by refining it, the strongest barrier against all error. But when that knowledge of letters was farther revived in the west by the help of the exiled Greeks, who were greatly indebted to the clergy for their protection and encouragement, and when the schools of the prophets were much increased in this and it's sister university ; and human Learning had highly improved the sons of the prophets ; then the reformation began gradually to dawn. Pure Religion again lifted up her head, shook off the rubbish of monkish barbarism and superstition, and appeared in her own primitive, lovely form. So far was the re-

surrection

surrection of letters from being fatal to, that it was the most happy period of, the Christian Religion. And history shews us, that divine and human wisdom have ever since gone hand in hand, mutually supporting, strengthening and illustrating each other, tho' they have equally suffered since, in some particular instances, from having their perfect work, by a dissipation of thought, by the folly and wickedness of men.

BUT to descend to particulars, and shew a few instances among many; wherein revelation can neither be rightly understood, nor properly defended, without the aid and assistance of improved reason and human Learning.

So long as there are men who call in question the truth as well as the reasonableness of our holy Religion; who assert, that GOD could not give a revelation; that HE cannot shew more favours, i.e. grant more blessings to some than to others, nor vary his dispensations, i.e. accommodate them to the varying circumstances of his creatures; so long will metaphysics and abstract reason be necessary to answer these objections by confirming and illustrating the particular and various dispensations of providence by analogy, by a view of the course of nature, by observations on unquestionable facts. For tho' we could not have foretold, had we not been informed, how GOD would have governed the

¹ The resurrection of letters was a fatal period &c. And again, christianity has been in decay ever since the resurrection of letters. Lord Bolingbroke on the study and use of history. Vol. 1. page 182. & 185. Oct. Edit.

world ; yet when revelation opens more instances similar to what is done by ordinary providences, it receives from thence an additional credibility.

AGAIN ; an intimate acquaintance with the histories, laws, customs, common allusions and popular notions of those early and distant times and nations, which were the immediate scenes of divine revelation, and with whom the sacred people had any intercourse and connection, will be found absolutely necessary to explain and illustrate several passages of holy scripture, whereby the propriety of their diction and language will not only be greatly beautified ; but their evidences strongly confirmed and enforced. And, GOD knows, the perverseness of modern infidelity is so great, that the defenders of our faith are obliged to make use of all these foreign aids and assistances ; nay, of our blessed SAVIOUR's inveterate enemies, the Jews and pagans, as undeniable, tho' unwilling witnesses for the authenticity of our holy Religion : For all the various manuscripts of the sacred scriptures collated in different parts of the world, the large citations from almost every page of them, which are to be found in the primitive fathers, and all succeeding Christian writers ; and the concurrent testimony of all the general councils for the genuineness of them, are scarce sufficient to convince the unreasonable gainsayer, that the sacred streams of these divine fountains of knowledge are conveyed to us pure and unmixed,

unmixed, some immaterial mistakes and errors of transcribers excepted.

FARTHER; it is of no small consequence to the cause of Religion to consult the ancient and modern travels into, and histories of, many parts of the heathen and christian world, and the Jewish people for the providential completion of those prophecies, that growing evidence of the truth of the scriptures, with respect to the fate of those people, nations and kingdoms; which were, at the predictions of their various future events, hid in the womb of time. The knowledge of the completion of which, by reading proper authors, must still add more undeniable testimonies to, and be a stronger confirmation of, the truth and certainty of divine revelation. And it may be proper to observe, that some emblematical actions of the prophets, by which their predictions were conveyed, tho' they have been much ridiculed by the profane, are yet, upon consulting ancient customs, very rationally to be vindicated; as having a significant use amongst people accustomed to instruction by emblems, how odd soever they may appear now to us.

IT requires, moreover, the aids and assistances of natural philosophy to distinguish in some, if not in many cases, true and real miracles from the ancient *Ægyptian* magic arts; from the pious cheats of the Romish church, and from some operations of the ordinary course

of nature. — And as we owe to one branch of this science the undeniable proof of the universal deluge; “ So we are indebted, as a learned writer observes, to Newton’s true theory of the world, for the demonstration of that intimate relation, which Moses speaks of, between the creator and his works; and who teaches, by his doctrine, as well as example, the philosophick world to believe and tremble.”

ADD to all this, that the useful study of morals, and the many ingenious treatises wrote upon them by authors ancient and modern, will shew in their true light the purest precepts of the gospel-morality. For as the defects and errors of the ancient moralists will clearly demonstrate to us the necessity, superior excellency and divinity of the Christian morals; so we can prove from the modern systems of ethicks, that their authors were greatly indebted to the rays of that fountain of moral light, the holy scriptures; which, tho’ they had not the gratitude to own it, furnished them with a rich variety of the purest and sublimest sentiments moral and divine, tho’ greatly diversified and

¹ Had the adventitious fossils not been found in every quarter of the globe, we could not conclude the deluge to have been universal: and had they been found in all kinds of soils indifferently, we might suppose them to be (what they were once commonly thought) the natives of those narrow beds in which they are discovered, and a kind of lusus naturæ. And from these two circumstances considered together an incontestable proof of the truth of the Mosaic relation, I think, may be deduced. Bp. Warburton’s prin. of nat. and rev. Religion, p. 202.

set off by them in a thousand beautiful and striking lights.

IN short ; the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, the great mysteries of it, are those only, in which the exercise and extent of our reason can be called in question. In this case, our reason is exercised in proving not that these things must be, but that they may be true ; and then the authority, by which they are published and established, is sufficient to prove, that they certainly are true. It is no prejudice to them, that they are not discoverable by reason, neither were some of the articles of natural Religion, if we may judge by the general ignorance of them. — It is likewise no just objection against them, that we cannot fully comprehend them : for what finite being can comprehend infinity, or find out the Almighty to perfection ? — When therefore GOD thought proper for our salvation to reveal himself under a distinction of persons, when he hath opened to us the method of atonement by the meritorious sufferings of his son, and has warned us not to neglect it under pain of eternal vengeance ; all that reason has to do in these cases is to shew, that these doctrines do not in their nature imply any contradiction ; and that we are not, antecedently to instruction, competent judges of the equity of them ; tho' much of it, yet not all, does now appear to us upon examination. And all this has been repeatedly shewn by the great and able defenders of revelation ; — who have vindicated our faith from all imaginary difficulties cast on

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it by fraud and enmity; and shewn why real ones must in many cases be expected; and proved, that notwithstanding several of that nature; yet the whole system is capable of being proved by external evidences, and is not unworthy of God to reveal and of man to accept. — And if we are able in this manner to vindicate the ways of God to man, why should we decline to do it? why should we leave unbelievers to triumph in their objections, which they will not fail to represent as unanswerable, if they continue in fact unanswered?

BUT the time now obliges me to shew in a few words, how and in what manner Religion and Learning conduce to make us happy. — Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding.

NOW not to insist on so common a topick as the distinguishing preeminence, which Learning gives us above the rest of our fellow-creatures, as would fully appear, if we compared the scenes of cultivated life with the barbarism of unlettered savages; we shall find, that it has no less influence in enlarging and refining the true and rational enjoyments of life, than in exalting and dignifying human nature. For knowledge is to the eye of the mind, what light is to the eye of the body: it cheers the soul and enlivens life; it brings in day and sunshine upon it; which will ease and dissipate the gloomy and heavier intervals of spleen and solitude. It was the greatest comfort, as well as the brightest ornament of the lives of the most eminent

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heathen philosophers. Epicurus in Tully tells us, that the pleasure of his writings, and the happiness of his memory in musing upon them, abated the sharpness of his pains ; they were a strong support to his old age, they kept off a great part of the weight of it, and made his years fit easy upon him. For of all worldly pleasure the progressive knowledge of human literature gives the mind the most rational and lasting satisfaction. It opens a wide and extensive prospect ; it takes in past and future ages into it's view ; and, by the help of revelation, even eternity itself. In such a spacious and boundleſs field of knowledge, we may expatiate far and wide, where-ever either busy curioſity, innocent amusement, or useful instruction directs ; where we ſhall find ourſelves, as we travel along, grow much wiser and better ; every new ſcene filling us with admiration, and engaging us in a generous and fresh purſuit ; where we ſhall find new rays of knowledge flowing in upon us from diſtinct arts and ſciences, and uniting their friendly beams to conduct us in our way. They will be a lantern to our feet and a light unto our paths. For the path of the Scholar, as well as of the just, is as the ſhining light, that ſhineth more and more unto the perfect day of knowledge.

BESIDES ; by a proper improvement of our rational faculties in all uſeful knowledge we ſhall learn to guard againſt the false reaſonings and ſubtile inſinuations of thoſe, whose interſt it is to deceiver. For Learning teaches us a just and clear

clear way of judging, ballances the weight of arguments on both sides, turns back the first offers and pleasing conceits of the mind as suspected ; and tells us not to tread a step without searching, as it were, and examining our ways. For men are always less credulous in proportion as they are more knowing. They bring every specious appearance of things to the test of right reason ; can view danger at a great distance, and always ward against it.—And by conversing with authors of a sound and penetrating judgment, of a refined and polished taste, the soul will insensibly contract such a superiour way of judging and acting upon all occasions, as will not only inspire us with a prudent and becoming conduct so as to prevent us from wandering into any indecencies and irregularities of behaviour, and carry us far beyond the low sphere of vice, and even the reach of every mean and vulgar amusement ; but will likewise induce us to transcribe all those noble sentiments and dictions of virtue into our lives and conversation ; and to copy after those beautiful descriptions of the refinements of manners, which give an agreeable polish to virtue and Learning, and which will make them appear lovely in the eyes of all beholders.—By such a justness and elegance of thinking and acting we shall stamp a double value on the dignity of human nature ; we shall, in a particular manner, adorn and beautify our own characters ; and, by the help of religion, form ourselves into the brightness of our great creator, and sanctify both our-

selves and our actions to a happy eternity. I say, by the help of Religion ; for education has not had her perfect work, and our happiness is but half completed, without it.—This is that wisdom, with respect of which all other accomplishments are nothing worth ; which whosoever getteth, loveth his own soul ; who-soever keepeth, shall find good.— This is that wisdom, which will give us that peace, which all the world besides cannot give ; that peace which passeth all understanding, even the peace of G o D : which neither depends upon the smiles of the great, nor the frowns of fortune ; which will administer true comfort to a man in the midst of all outward calamities. For it is the nature and property of virtue and innocence to grow and flourish under oppression ; and a lively sense of GOD's favour relieves men under the sorest evils and distresses of this life. So that let the condition of the good christian, who can give a reason of the hope that is in him, and whose faith is full of immortality, be what it will here, he must still be cheerful in his spirits, because innocent in his conversation. Nay, when old age itself, which is deservedly reckoned one of the greatest troubles and inconveniencies of life, shall make it's approaches to him, with all it's usual attendants of aches and pains ; yet even then the pleasure of having done well, will be fresh and lively, will double upon reflection, and speak peace to his departing soul.

IN short; such a pleasure as this, is a foretaste of heaven and an earnest of eternity ; such as will

will be sufficient to let in a ray of glory to cheer and comfort a man's heart, when all other comforts of this life shall fail and drop off; such as will make his bed in his sickness, and, when he is just leaving this world, and death shall have closed his eyes, will transport him to those joys, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.

— Happy then, thrice happy is that man, that getteth wisdom; and, withal, getteth understanding!

I shall now conclude with an inference from what has been said.

SINCE then Religion and Learning conduce so much to the happiness of human life, how gratefully sensible ought we to be, who have in these seminaries all the helps, opportunities and encouragements, that we can either want or wish for, of being wise and good, and consequently happy. — Walk about this our Zion, go round about her, and tell the towers thereof; consider her palaces; how elegant and beautiful they are; how sequestered from the noise and hurry of the world; where arts and sciences love to grow and flourish; and the still voice of reason is heard and listen'd to. View those grand and spacious repositories of Learning, where we may peruse at large all the various productions of the wisest men in all ages, and enrich ourselves with all their surprising and useful labours.

— Here are likewise different tempers and geniuses happily mingled together, and all eager, or at least should be so, in the race of knowledge,

ledge, to kindle a laudable and generous emulation in our breasts: some of quick apprehension will soon light the torch and far out-run the rest, 'till they cool by little and little, and at last grow weary. Such tender things are those exalted actions of the mind! But then the more flow, but more steady and judicious soon come up, and carry on the others' ingenious conceptions by soberer degrees to a full accomplishment.—Here we may imitate those noctes atticæ, or the entertainments of the Deipnosophists of old; wherein a man may be refreshed in his mind and understanding no less than in his body: where each of us bring all the fruits we have plucked in the day time from the tree of knowledge, and consult about the goodness of them, and how we may proceed to gather more to the best advantage; and where from the near alliance betwixt arts and sciences, and the friendly commerce of Learning in general, we may communicate and receive mutual benefit. A happiness peculiar to such seats of education! Here likewise we enjoy the true happiness of living according to the rules and pleasures of uncorrupted nature; and are under the agreeable necessity, by the kind discipline of the place, of at least appearing good, if we are not really so; or else we shall be so lost to all sense of goodness as to be singular in wickedness; which is always so ashamed to stand alone, that it wants numbers to keep it in any tolerable countenance.—And, lastly, we are here blessed with the morning and evening sacrifice
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to sanctify all our studies ; and to beg a blessing upon our laudable and pious endeavours. — Since then we have the best means of edification , it is but in justice expected , that we should be the best men ; that we should bless GOD , who impresses on the minds of men good desires and moves them to works of charity and munificence , for the pious liberality of our founders and benefactors ; to whom we are indebted for all the above-mentioned happy advantages . And let us , as in gratitude bound , pay all decent regard to their names and memories ; praise and imitate their virtues ; live up to the rules of our institution , and adorn our several professions . — Let us make the interest of these nurseries of education our own ; especially , since the credit of them does , in some measure , redound to ourselves ; as being of the number of those , who were bred up under their culture and discipline ; which have produced the several persons , who at times by their excellencies in all religious and useful Learning have added lustre to the university and made it renowned among all nations . And if there is a pleasing pride in recollecting , how many men famous in their generations for Religion and Learning , industry and morality , duty and loyalty , good order and discipline , and every thing that is commendable , were educated in the same place with ourselves ; our annals can furnish us with as great a variety of persons , as any seminary of arts and sciences can do , who were eminent in all great and good qualities , and
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remarkable for every thing that is praise-worthy. And if we think, that the lustre of their virtues casts some sort of honour on us, let their examples be a farther inducement to us ; and kindle a kind of noble and generous emulation in our breasts, that when we have finished our course with equal honour, we may, as a debt due to posterity, deliver down our lamp, as an additional light, to all succeeding ages.

AND as for the younger part of my audience, let me advise them, not to think themselves too wise for instruction, or too manly for restraint. It is dangerous trusting to our own judgment at any age ; especially at the most giddy time of life, when the passions run high, and reason is not strong enough to fence against them : when so many deceitful fancies, pleasing errors and false lights are hung out to entice their unwary steps out of the right way. Believe me, there is as little common prudence, as there is modesty, in despising the guidance of wiser and more experienced, discerning men than ourselves. — You may therefore very safely commit yourselves to the direction of those, who can have no other design than to watch over you for your own good. They do not pretend to impose upon, or usurp a dominion over you ; but only to improve your reason, and to curb the irregular fallies of youthful lusts and passions. They only invite you to be wise and virtuous ; intreat you to be happy in this life, and infinitely so in the next. A request most reasonable and friendly ! You have all the liberty a
good

good man would choose to enjoy ; and all the advantages a learned man can wish for, in order to make all proper improvements in wisdom and understanding. — You are therefore obliged in a double Capacity, as scholars as well as men, to distinguish yourselves by an exemplary behaviour, and to act suitably to the improved dignity of human nature. And as your notions of Religion are cultivated and rectified by good literature ; and a liberal education hath raised you far above the common level in so many parts of useful knowledge ; it is fit you should rise to a proportionable height in the practice of Religion, virtue and good manners : you should make use of that rising ground, as a person, I believe, expresses it, to look the nearer into heaven, not with a design to brave, but more fully to admire and adore the infinite perfection of Almighty G o d.

LET it be therefore your study and endeavour, as much as it is your duty and interest to make all suitable improvements under your present happy situation and advantages. That when you leave this place, and begin too late to reflect how insignificant and ignorant you are ; you may not then, as I know too many now do, blame the university for the want of that discipline, of the great strictness of which you now so much complain. Consider that as these learned seminaries now suffer by your unstatutable irregularities and extravagancies, so will your country afterwards by your ignorance, and yourselves by a mispent youth.

AND as for those, who have the advantages of birth and fortune, who are to be the makers and guardians of our laws and liberties, let them not just run through the forms and places of education without any real improvement ; and then, for fashion-sake, travel, as they call it, at an unripen'd age ; when they have laid in no stock of knowledge to graft upon ; when they are capable of making no other observations, than such as tend to corrupt their manners, entice them from that strictness of discipline, that severity of moral virtue and integrity of Life, which were the glory of their ancestors, and the admiration of foreign nations.

THERE is, indeed, a space of time between that of youth being drawn from the shade of life, from the peaceable and solid Amusements of study, and that of their entering upon action and public business, which should be employed in reading mankind. For practical knowledge built upon the solid foundations of good sense and Learning must ever go into the composition of a great man's character. But then this is the last thing to be done in education ; when the mind is enriched with all useful Learning, and a man is thoroughly acquainted with the laws and manners of his own country, then travelling into other nations will give him an opportunity of increasing his knowledge and opening his mind with that generous enlargement, which men of sense and judgment will unavoidably do from variety of objects and diversity of conversation. This is that beautiful, finishing

finishing polish, which is done by conversing with the sensible, polite world ; which will make Learning fit gracefully upon a man without any forbidding, morose, or pedantic appearances ; and which will stamp an additional value upon what he does or says by a peculiar grace, a manner and decorum. — But it's only lost labour to rub the native rust from, and give an outward polish to, any ordinary and common metal, that bears no image and superscription, but to shew the badness of the composition ; and that it will not pass current.

I N short ; if you have the honest and laudable ambition of standing foremost in the rank of all great and good men, when you are called into publick life after the thoughtless, giddy, frothy sprightliness of youth subsides ; let me advise you to lay a good foundation here of all religious and useful knowledge against the time to come : that after you have made the proper improvements in all moral and intellectual endowments ; when you are confirmed in all wisdom and goodness ; and arrived at the full stature of your understandings, and are in perfect favour with G O D and man, you may with as much honour, as safety, step forth into action, — fill your characters, — adorn your several stations and employments to the best advantage, — reflect back a lustre on the place of your education, and after a life made happy here by Religion, Learning and every thing commendable, be so for ever, in the world to come.

F I N I S.

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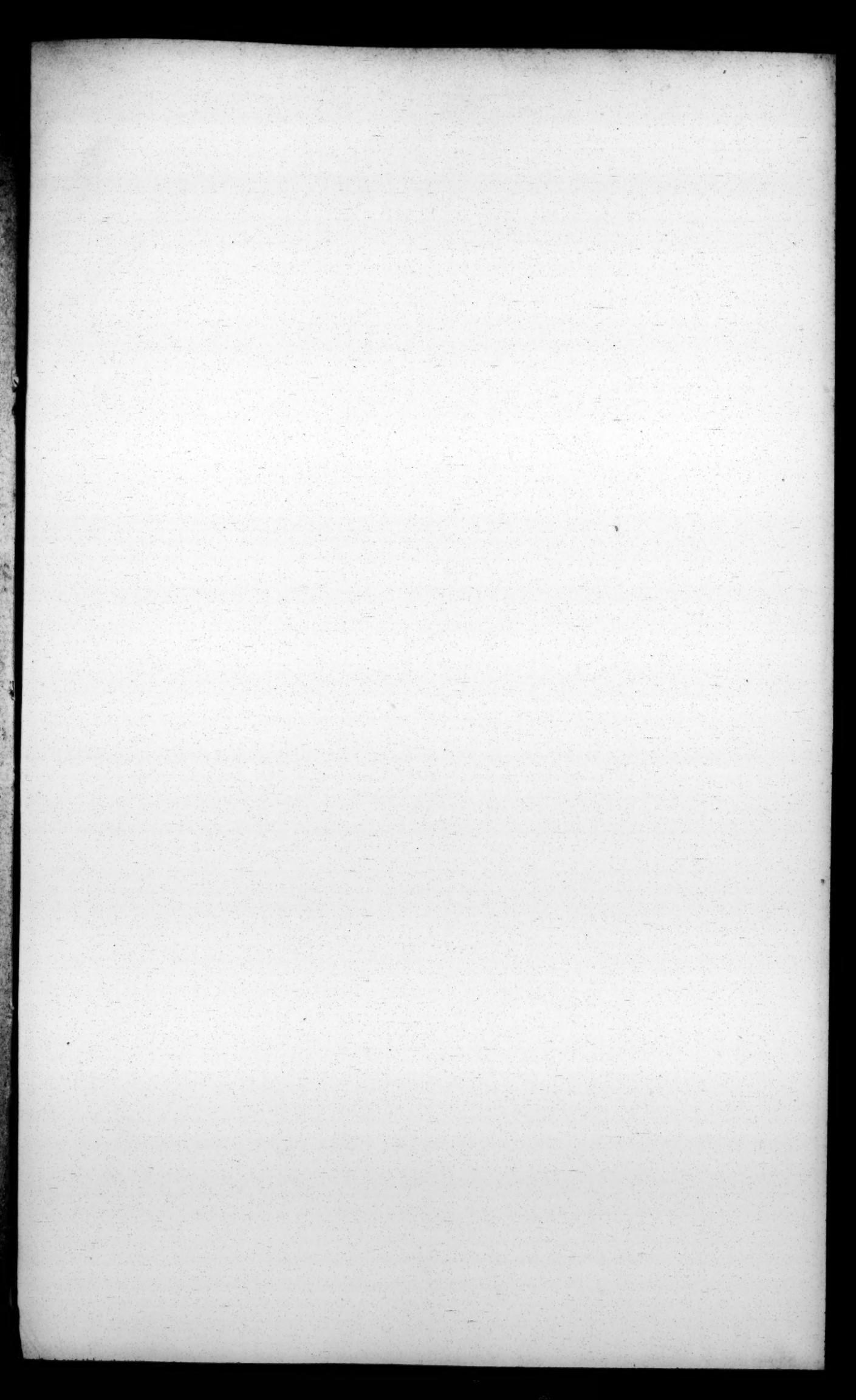
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F I N I S.

Religion. I believe every living creature
has a right to the world in common.
I believe that all men are equal in value,
and that all should have an equal share
in the earth's products. I believe that
the earth belongs to all men, and that
no man has a right to own it, or to
use it for his own benefit, without the
consent of all men. I believe that
the earth is the common property of
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